

Communication and Engagement Strategy 2021-2026



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Introduction

Highlands and Islands Airports Limited (HIAL) plays a vital role in Scotland's transport network, operating across a large geographical area, with regional airports located at Barra, Benbecula, Campbeltown, Dundee, Inverness, Islay, Kirkwall, Stornoway, Sumburgh, Tiree and Wick John O'Groats.

Our airports provide crucial connectivity and ensure lifeline and essential air services operate for some of Scotland's more remote communities.


It is important that we share information, seek views and form opinion. Therefore, an effective two-way flow of information is needed to ensure that communication with both internal and external contacts is purposeful, clear, honest, timely and relevant.

The way in which we engage with our colleagues and stakeholders, and the way they engage with us, is central to their understanding and perception of HIAL and the critical role it plays. Equally, understanding the needs of our staff and stakeholders is central to providing our services to the highest standard and meeting community and customer demand.

Effective communication is key to supporting and delivering change, while ensuring that our service continues to the highest possible standards. We must build ongoing communication and engagement with our teams and the people we serve.

HIAL's ambition is for all 11 of its airports to be carbon neutral. We are committed to working with our aviation partners to decarbonise flights within Scotland, and to help meet the Scottish Government's target to create the world's first net-zero aviation region by 2040.

Our communication and engagement strategy will support these environmental goals and will deploy messaging and undertake communication and engagement activities utilising techniques and tools conducive to our environmental objectives.



Denise Sutherland
Head of Communications

Our communications and engagement activity will focus around four key aspects:

To inform

We will provide our colleagues and stakeholders with the information they need – either to perform their role, understand and support the company and its goals, share facts and report progress.

To listen

We will listen to our colleagues and stakeholders and respond to feedback.

To engage

We will pro-actively engage and invite open and honest dialogue with our colleagues and stakeholders.

To influence

We will aim to positively influence decision-making and support colleague and stakeholder interaction and participation.

Strategy Aims and Objectives

We know how crucial our airports are for essential connections for our remote communities and how they contribute to the social and economic prosperity of the areas we serve. This was brought into sharp focus with the arrival of the Covid-19 pandemic in early 2020.

Covid-19 has had, and continues to have, a considerable impact on HIAL and the wider aviation industry. Recovery will take time. Our focus over the next five years will be to rebuild our services and operations. Our aim is to build back stronger and balance that recovery with our environmental commitments.

To do this, HIAL must develop ongoing communication and engagement with the people and organisations who have a vested interest in our airports, aviation, the environment, our local communities, and who deliver our service.

We aim to deliver a planned and sustained approach to communications and engagement that will enable effective colleague and stakeholder involvement, support the delivery of HIAL's strategic priorities, underpin our decision-making processes, and protect and enhance our reputation.

HIAL's Values

Our values underpin everything we do and how we do it. They define who we are, our expectations of each other and ourselves, how we interact with each other and how we interact with our customers, communities, and other stakeholders.



Effective communication is crucial to promote HIAL's values throughout the company. It is important that we highlight and recognise our colleagues who live HIAL's values through their everyday duties, and those who go above and beyond.

Our Communication and Engagement Principles

Our communications and engagement will adhere to the following principles, which align to HIAL's values.

Open and Transparent

We will, wherever possible, provide our audiences with the most comprehensive information about our organisation and service, using the most appropriate channels. We will be honest in our communications when standards have not been met and improvements are required.

Two way

We will ensure our colleague and stakeholders' voices are heard through effective two-way communication. We will listen, act where appropriate, and provide feedback.

Approachable

We will welcome contact and interaction from our colleagues, stakeholders, and members of the public. We will always be courteous and friendly. We will ensure our board members, senior and local managers are accessible at a corporate and local level.

Proactive and Responsible

We will provide accurate and timely communication and engagement to keep our colleagues, stakeholders, and members of the public informed. We will ensure that up-to-date information is shared with an emphasis on building positive relationships and trust with our colleagues and stakeholders.

Clear and Consistent

We will use clear and consistent language that is easily understood. We will be concise in our communication with an emphasis on plainer and more simple language. Our communication and engagement will align with HIAL's corporate identity.

Our Corporate Identity

It is important that HIAL has a strong corporate identity that reflects the quality and values of our organisation.

Corporate and brand identity represents our professionalism and our character. It includes our mission, our vision, and our logo, as well as our values.

It is essential that our corporate identity is delivered consistently across the organisation. However, it is also important that the individuality of each of our airports and the communities they serve is recognised.

The way we communicate is a key element of our brand identity. Our communication channels will provide a window to our organisation to help build trust amongst our communities.

Our people lie at the heart of HIAL, and it is important our corporate identity emphasises the vital role our colleagues play in ensuring our communities remain connected.

Our strategy will focus on:

- Developing clear and consistent corporate brand guidelines to ensure a professional and consistent presentation of HIAL's documentation and consistent use of corporate logos across all communication channels, as well as standard signage for buildings and vehicles.
- Expanding our photography archive to ensure up-to date footage for all our airports and supporting infrastructure. We will use our colleagues to portray the HIAL story, using employees rather than models or stock photography wherever possible.



HIAL staff

Gaelic Language and Culture

The Gaelic language and culture is an important part of Scotland's communities, heritage, and identity.

HIAL's Gaelic Language Plan for 2021-2026, which was approved by the Bòrd na Gàidhlig, outlines how we will support the development of Gaelic and raise its profile across the company and within our communities.

We recognise the importance of enabling more people to use Gaelic as their preferred mode of communication.

Our strategy will focus on:

- Supporting initiatives that promote the use of Gaelic both internally and through our external online and social media channels.
- Increasing the volume of bilingual corporate communications and the publication of key corporate public facing documents in both English and Gaelic.
- Ensuring our branding and logos demonstrate equal respect for the Gaelic language as detailed in our Gaelic Language Plan.



HIAL Board meeting

Our Stakeholders

HIAL has a diverse range of stakeholders, each of which has an interest and/or is directly or indirectly affected by our actions, by our objectives, our policies and our actions. Communication and engagement play an important role in stakeholder management.

Our stakeholders have different needs, and our communication and engagement must reflect their requirements. Understanding their needs and the most effective way to communicate with them will be key to the success of this strategy.

Stakeholders can promote or hinder a project. Effective stakeholder engagement can foster positive attitudes and influence others to act in our favour.

We must strive to persuade our stakeholders by listening and addressing their concerns and dispelling rumour and correcting misinformation.

In addition to our HIAL colleagues, who are one of our primary stakeholders, we have a wide range of stakeholders, which include:

- Local communities / businesses
- Local authorities
- MSPs/MPs
- Passengers
- Airlines and operators
- Concessionaires
- Public
- Civil Aviation Authority
- Transport Scotland
- Scottish Government Ministers/Officials
- Department for Transport
- Potential future employees
- Transport agencies
- Tourist agencies
- The media

Our strategy will focus on:

- Mapping our stakeholders to identify those who share our aims, values, and ambitions; those who stake their reputation on our performance; those on whom we depend on to deliver our strategy and services; and those who influence others.
- Prioritising our communication and engagement activities with our identified stakeholders in support of key issues and organisational objectives and projects. Aligning our engagement, frequency, and delivery channels to meet the needs of our different stakeholder groups.
- On proactive engagement, ensuring the right engagement with the right audiences at the right time. We will align our engagement to ensure it is delivered consistently at a board, corporate, regional, and local level.

Internal Communication and Engagement

Our people lie at the heart of HIAL and are responsible for ensuring we operate a safe, welcoming airport network to the very highest professional standard.

We will place strong emphasis on our internal communications to support our colleagues to play an active role in achieving our goals.

Our strategy will focus on developing an environment where colleagues understand and share HIAL's vision and objectives. It is important that a strong and open communication culture exists across the company with emphasis on local engagement.

It is vital that our colleagues get the information required to undertake their role efficiently in a consistent and timely manner. We will continue to develop an effective internal communications infrastructure, underpinned by channels and policies that facilitate the effective exchange of information.

Our strategy will focus on:

- Equipping and empowering local managers and colleagues to help them take responsibility for effective communication and engagement in their work and ensure consistent delivery of key information and local feedback.
- Deploying two-way communications and engagement channels at both corporate and local level to provide direct access for discussion, gauge colleague morale and deploy strategies to address areas of concern.
- Providing colleagues with direct access to HIAL Board members and the Senior Management Team through a series of programmed engagement sessions, utilising a mix of face-to-face and virtual sessions.
- Supporting the development of a culture of professionalism and continuous improvement through communicating best practice and learnings. We will celebrate colleague success and achievements.
- Develop a communication and engagement plan to highlight HIAL's values, including graphics, documentation, and electronic promotion. We will recognise our colleagues who live HIAL's values through their everyday duties, and those who go above and beyond.

External Communication and Engagement

The support and participation of HIAL's external stakeholders is key to our long-term objectives and success. With that in mind, it is important that we enhance trust and confidence in HIAL and develop an understanding of our vital role, our strategy, our challenges, and our achievements.

Our messaging will underpin our external communication and engagement activity. At a board and corporate level we will develop a consistent and credible narrative to ensure HIAL is effectively and correctly positioned with our external audiences. At local level, we will deploy consistent messaging to articulate HIAL's essential role, not only in supporting the essential connections and lifeline services that are vital for our communities, but the social and economic contribution our individual airports make to their local area.

As a public body with aviation responsibilities for a significant area covering the north of Scotland, it is vital that we communicate and engage with political stakeholders at a national and local level. HIAL must engage across the political areas to ensure we can contribute towards, and support UK, Scottish and local government policy that affect our operation and objectives.

The media – both digital and traditional print and broadcast media – remain an important communication channel for HIAL. They reach a sizeable proportion of HIAL's population area and retain significant influence among our key external stakeholders and decision-makers.

Our strategy will focus on:

- Equipping and empowering local managers to help them take responsibility for effective communication and engagement with external audiences, including local communities, local and national politicians, and those with a vested interest in HIAL and local airports.
- Delivering a clear and consistent narrative to articulate HIAL's role, purpose, and objectives. We will ensure our messaging demonstrates the HIAL journey and the outcome of our work, focussing on our colleagues who provide our service.
- A proactive approach towards local and national media offering exclusives and packaged features on our work with full background briefings. We will remain open and honest and will share both positive and potentially contentious information to keep our external stakeholders up to date and informed.
- Ensuring communication and engagement are embedded as key organisational activities. We will develop our spokespeople at board, corporate and local level to maximise our communication and engagement programme and deliver effective media and stakeholder engagement.



Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluating our communication and engagement will help improve the effectiveness of our communications, how effectively we have engaged with our colleagues and stakeholders and help us make any adjustments to our strategy, messaging, or activities.

There are several ways of evaluating the success of communications and engagement.

Methods include focus groups, engagement events, media monitoring, feedback mechanisms, website and intranet hits, and social media engagement.

Just as important, we will benchmark ourselves against other partners and learn from what they are doing.

We will produce a daily media monitoring report and will consolidate this in a monthly report to include indicators of a positive, neutral, or negative tone as well as estimated reach.

We will also produce a monthly social media evaluation report to detail the reach, interaction, and increased following on HIAL's social media channels.

We will gauge colleague interaction by monitoring access to HIAL Hub, our intranet site, internal publication and newsletters and staff engagement events at both corporate and local level.

Similarly, we will appraise the effectiveness of our stakeholder communications and engagement, through attendance and engagement at corporate and local events, the number and tone of letters/emails received generally and in relation to specific topics or published reports.

We will seek feedback both formally and informally, for example via surveys, direct questions at events and in constructive feedback and suggestions for improvements.

Any comments or feedback on this strategy should be forwarded to the Head of Communications via communications@hial.co.uk.



HIAL staff

